[593] [562] [586] self must put up with any treatment from them. Only wives born in the better families can force better treatment from their husbands through their family ties, and in case of mistreatment by their husbands, such wives can by a legal action cause the husbands to separate from them. All other wives are exposed without protection to the arbitrary will of their husbands, who may at any time separate from them or take younger wives besides them if the older ones no longer please them, all this without giving reasons.

The most important circumstance which makes all public life unbearably monotonous and boring in Turkestan towns, and prevents the rise of a real social and family life, is the absolute seclusion, worse than in a cloister, of the women from the world of men. On the street the women must either not appear at all, or else they must be so heavily veiled that nothing at all can be seen of their figures. At home, however, they must live in a special section which can never be entered by any [584] man other than their husbands and children. The groom is not allowed to see his bride even once before the wedding, and even during the marriage ceremony the bride and groom are in two different places. Thus the men must, unfortunately, depend on the judgments of their female relatives or on professional matchmakers for their choice of wives. Substitutions, such as those by which the patriarch Joseph was tricked by his father-in-law Laban are therefore easily made. At best the wives can live the rest of their lives communicating only with their brothers and parents in addition to their husbands, while all other men are for them as /194/ good as nonexistent. The women cannot take part in any public festivity, not even in family celbrations or receptions of guests in their own houses. A more joyless existence than that of the native wives in the towns of Central Asia can scarcely be imagined. (1)

[839] 1. I will note here that in Turkestan the institution of eunuchs is unknown. Even the harems of the khans there are no eunuchs.

On the whole, however, the life of the men too is in no way enviable as a result of the sharp separation of the sexes. A man without family never meets a female face to face at all, all his life, and is left exclusively to associate with men. The result of these unnatural conditions is an unbelievable moral depravity and a really horrifying increase of all possible unnatural vices.

The married men, too, have relatively little contact with their